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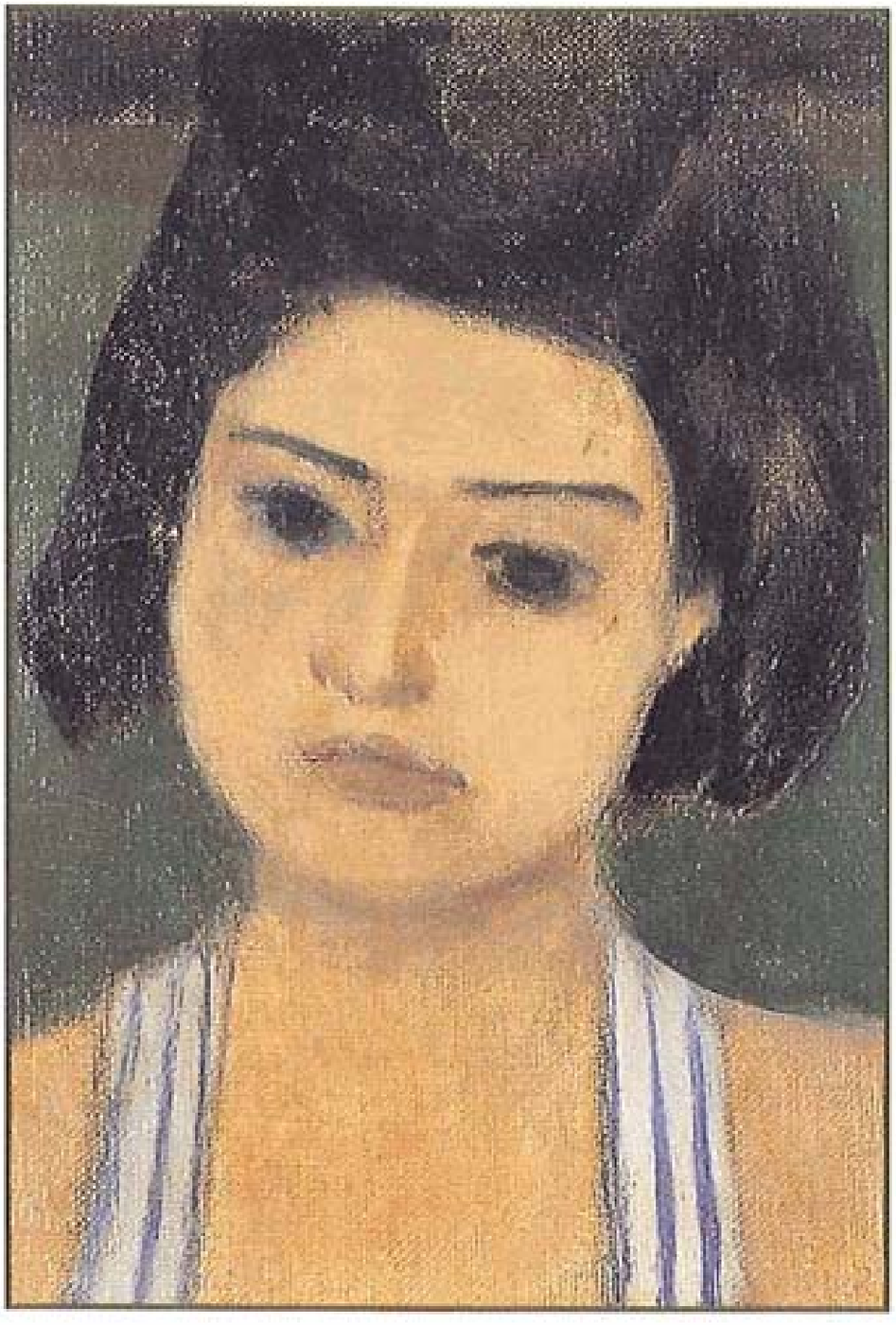

SCHUMANN

Kinderszenen

TCHAIKOVSKY

Album for the Young

DEBUSSY

Children's Corner Suite

Idil Biret, Piano

Robert Schumann (1810 - 1856)

Scenes of Childhood / Kinderszenen Op. 15

1	Of Foreign Lands & People / Von fremden Ländern und Menschen	(1:26)
2	A Strange Story / Curiose Geschichte	(1:08)
3	Catch-as-catch-can / Hasche-Mann	(0:32)
4	Pleading Child / Bittendes Kind	(0:47)
5	Happy Enough / Glückes genug	(1:12)
6	An Important Event / Wichtige Begebenheit	(0:51)
7	Dreaming / Träumerei	(2:44)
8	By the Fire-side / Am Camin	(0:59)
9	Knight of the Hobby-horse / Ritter vom Steckenpferd	(0:48)
10	Almost Too Serious / Fast zu ernst	(2:07)
11	Frightening / Fürchtenmachen	(1:48)
12	Child Falling Asleep / Kind im Einschlummern	(2:02)
13	The Poet Speaks / Der Dichter spricht	(2:39)

Pyotr Il'yich Tchaikovsky (1840 - 1893)

Album for the young / Album pour enfants Op. 39

14	Morning Prayer / Prière du matin	(1:29)
15	Winter Morning / Le matin en hiver	(1:03)
16	Hobbyhorse / Le petit cavalier	(0:35)
17	Mamma / Maman	(1:10)
18	The Toy Soldiers' March / Marche des soldats de bois	(0:50)
19	Dolly is ill / La poupée malade	(2:35)
20	Dolly's Funeral / Enterrement de la poupée	(2:12)
21	Waltz / Valse	(1:11)
22	My new Dolly / La nouvelle poupée	(0:25)

23	Mazurka	(1:10)
24	Russian Song / Chanson russe	(0:51)
25	Peasant Prelude / Le paysan prélude	(1:11)
26	Popular Song (Kamarinskaya) / Chanson populaire	(0:34)
27	Polka	(0:50)
28	Italian Song / Chanson italienne	(0:56)
29	Old French Song / Mélodie antique française	(0:54)
30	German Song / Chanson allemande	(1:06)
31	Neapolitan Song / Chanson napolitaine	(0:59)
32	A Nursery Tale / Conte de la vieille bonne	(0:40)
33	The Witch (Baba Yaga) / La sorcière	(0:39)
34	Sweet Dreams / Douce rêverie	(2:32)
35	The Lark / Chant de l'alouette	(1:01)
36	The Organ-grinder's Song / L'orgue de barbarie	(1:34)
37	At Church / A l'église	(2:48)

Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

Children's Corner

38	Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum	(2:20)
39	Jimbo's Lullaby (Berceuse des éléphants)	(3:53)
40	Serenade for the Doll (Sérénade à la poupée)	(2:27)
41	The Snow is Dancing	(2:50)
42	The Little Shepherd	(2:49)
43	Golliwogg's Cake-walk	(3:05)

Music for children can be of two kinds. It may be intended for children to play, in which case it must be simple in musical content and without technical difficulty, or for children to hear, when it may make greater demands on a performer, without overtaxing the listener. Elements that both kinds of music share are generally brevity and ease of comprehension, the second aided by characteristic titles. The development of the pianoforte as a common domestic instrument, coupled with the literary tendencies of composers in the nineteenth century, led to the creation of a multitude of piano pieces for children and for the moderately talented amateur. Pre-eminent among these must be the Kinderszenen and Album für die Jugend of Robert Schumann, pieces intended to instruct and to entertain, in a way that Johann Sebastian Bach, a century earlier, would hardly have envisaged for his children, to whom he made less concession. Among works by great composers intended for children are the Children's Album of Tchaikovsky and early in the present century Debussy's Children's Corner.

Robert Schumann must seem in many ways typical of the age in which he lived, combining a number of the principal characteristics of Romanticism in his music and in his life. Born in Zwickau in 1810, the son of a bookseller, publisher and writer, he showed an early interest in literature, and was to make a name for himself in later years as a writer and editor of the Neue Zeitschrift für Musik, a journal launched in 1834.

After a period at university, to satisfy, the ambitions of his widowed mother, Schumann, still showing the wide interests of a dilettante, turned more fully to music under the tuition of Friedrich Wieck, a famous teacher whose energies had been largely directed towards the training of his daughter Clara, a pianist of prodigious early talent.

Schumann's own ambitions as a pianist were to be frustrated by a weakness of the fingers, the result, it is supposed, of mercury treatment for syphilis, which he had contracted from a servant-girl in Wieck's employment. Nevertheless in the 1830s he was to write a great deal of music for the piano, much of it in the form of shorter, genre pieces, often enough with some extra-musical, literary or autobiographical association.

In health Schumann had long been subject to sudden depressions and had on one occasion attempted to take his own life. This nervous instability had shown itself in other members of his family, in his father and in his sister, and accentuated, perhaps, by venereal disease, it was to bring him finally to insanity and death in an asylum. Friedrich Wieck, an anxious father, was possibly aware of Schumann's weaknesses when he made every effort to prevent a proposed marriage between his daughter Clara and his former pupil. Clara was nine years younger than Schumann and represented for her father a considerable investment of time and hope.

At first, when he lodged in Wieck's house in Leipzig, Schumann had shown little interest in Clara, and in 1834 he became secretly engaged to Ernestine von Fricken, a pupil of Wieck and illegitimate daughter of Baron von Fricken, a Bohemian nobleman. It was for her that Schumann wrote his Fasching: Schwänke auf vier Noten, a set of pieces based on the four musical notes of his name, S C H A, which, by a lucky chance, also formed the name of the von Fricken's home-town, Asch. It was this work that was later given the title Carnaval: scènes mignonnes sur quatre notes. By the following summer Schumann had discovered the secret of Ernestine's illegitimacy and begun to transfer his affections to the fifteen-year-old Clara Wieck.

Wieck was to do his utmost to prevent a marriage that can have brought Clara little happiness, but after considerable litigation the marriage took place and the couple were married in the autumn of 1840, a year in which Schumann was to write an incredibly large number of songs, before turning his attention, at his wife's prompting to the larger forms of orchestral music.

Schumann's subsequent career took him and his wife first to Dresden and in 1850 to Düsseldorf, where he briefly held his first official position as director of music for the city, an office in which he proved increasingly inadequate. In February, 1854, he attempted to drown himself, and was to spend the remaining years of his life in a private asylum at Endenich, near Bonn. He died there on 29th July, 1856.

Schumann wrote his Kinderszenen in 1838. As he told Clara, he had composed thirty little pieces, and from these he selected thirteen, all of them designed to express an adult's reminiscence of childhood, or, as he said in a letter to Clara, a reflection of her comment that he sometimes seemed to her as a child. The music is technically undemanding, of ingenuous simplicity, the titles self-explanatory, without the cryptic implications of Papillons and Carnaval, an outstanding example of what Schumann was able to achieve in forms as limited as this.

The music of Tchaikovsky, in spite of the reservations of contemporaries at home and abroad, must seem to us both essentially Russian and essentially and firmly in the West European tradition. In Vienna the critic Eduard Hanslick was able to complain of the "trivial Cossack cheer" of the finale of the Violin Concerto, but in Russia Tchaikovsky never went far enough to please the self-appointed leader of musical nationalists, Balakirev. While by no means a miniaturist, he nevertheless excelled in his mastery of the smaller forms necessary in ballet, and exhibited to some extent in his piano pieces, a necessary element in any composer's output, with a readier market than for larger scale works. The nineteenth century was, after all, the age of the domestic pianist.

The son of a chief inspector of mines in Government service in Votkinsk, Tchaikovsky was born in 1840 and educated at first at home by a beloved governess and later at the St. Petersburg School of Jurisprudence, in preparation for a career in the Ministry of Justice. This he was to abandon in 1863, when he joined the newly established St. Petersburg Conservatory, founded by Anton Rubinstein, the first of its kind in Russia. Three years later he joined the staff of the new Conservatory in Moscow, directed by Nikolay Rubinstein, Anton Rubinstein's brother.

Tchaikovsky, abnormally sensitive and diffident, and tormented by his own homosexuality that seemed to isolate him from the society of the time, had already made a considerable impression as a composer, when an unwise, face-saving marriage in 1877 brought complete nervous collapse and immediate separation from his new wife. In 1878 he was able to resign from the Conservatory, thanks to the assistance of a rich widow, Nadezhda von Meck, whom he was never to meet but who offered him both financial and moral support for some thirteen years.

In 1893, shortly after the St. Petersburg performance of his Sixth Symphony, Tchaikovsky died, it is thought by his own hand, compelled to this step by a court of honour of his fellows from the School of Jurisprudence, after threats of exposure and scandal resulting from a liaison with a young nobleman. His death was widely mourned both in Russia and abroad, where his music had won considerable favour.

Tchaikovsky's Album pour enfants was written during the year 1878 between the months of February and October. Unlike Children's Corner, the collection, described as 24 pièces faciles (à la Schumann), is designed for a child's performance. In a letter written from Florence to his brother Anatoli in December he asks him to tell his sister Sasha that the album has been published. He dedicated it to Vladimir Davidov, his beloved nephew Bobik. 1878 brought Tchaikovsky a welcome relief from his duties at the Moscow Conservatory and a continuing reliance on Nadezhda von Meck. Writing to her on 30th April he mentions his desire to enrich the musical literature available for children, providing short and simple pieces with titles that are attractive to them.

The titles of the pieces that constitute the Album pour enfants are a clear indication of the nature of each little piece, the published order of which differed from that proposed by Tchaikovsky. Morning Prayer, a little hymn, makes a suitable opening, followed by a vigorous Winter Morning and a lively hobbyhorse. Mamma is treated with appropriate tenderness and the March of the Toy Soldiers with suitably brisk movement. A sad waltz marks the illness of the doll, whose funeral is solemn enough. There is a characteristic Waltz and then the appearance of a new doll, a lively creature. A Polish Mazurka leads to a Russian

folk-dance, while the peasant accordion-player has a limited command of the instrument. The Kamarinskaya, a Popular Song is followed by a Polka. The Italian Song is borrowed from a song Tchaikovsky heard sung in the street in Florence by Vittorio, a boy singer. An Old French Song has its parallel in Tchaikovsky's opera The Maid of Orleans, contrasted with a German Ländler. Naples provides a song that also serves as a Neapolitan Dance in Swan Lake, while the old nurse tells a sinister ghost-story. The witch is Baba Yaga, a particularly terrifying figure of Russian legend as she flies through the night, Sweet Dreams and the Song of the Lark are succeeded by a Venetian song, played by an organ-grinder and a farewell in a very Russian church.

Claude Debussy was born in 1862, the son of a shop-keeper who was later to turn his hand to other activities, with varying success. He started piano lessons at the age of seven and continued two years later, improbably enough, with Verlaine's mother-in-law, who claimed to have been a pupil of Chopin. In 1872 he entered the Conservatoire, where he abandoned the plan of becoming a virtuoso pianist, turning his principal attention to composition. In 1880, at the age of eighteen, he was employed by Tchaikovsky's patroness Nadezhda von Meck as tutor to her children and house-musician. On his return to the Conservatoire he entered the class of Bizet's friend Ernest Guiraud and in 1884 won the Prix de Rome, the following year reluctantly taking up obligatory residence, according to the terms of the prize, at the Villa Medici in Rome, where he met Liszt. By 1887 he was back in Paris, winning his first significant success in 1900 with Nocturnes and going on, two years later, to a succès de scandale with his opera Pelléas et Mélisande, based on the play by Maurice Maeterlinck, a work that established his position as a composer of importance.

Debussy's personal life brought some unhappiness in his first marriage in 1899 to a mannequin, Lily Texier, and his association from 1903 with Emma Bardac, the wife of a banker and an amateur singer, whom he eventually married in 1908. In the summer of 1904 he had abandoned his wife, moving into an apartment with Emma Bardac, and the subsequent attempt at suicide by the former, who had shared with him the difficulties of his early career, alienated a number of the composer's friends. His final years were darkened by the war and by cancer, the cause of his death in March 1918, when he left unfinished a planned series of chamber music works, only three of which had been completed.

Children's Corner was completed in 1908 and dedicated to the composer's daughter Claude-Emma, affectionately known to her father as Chouchou, born in 1905, three years before the marriage of her parents. His dedication reads: A ma chère petite Chouchou, avec les tendres excuses de son Père pour ce qui va suivre. The technical demands of the six pieces and the age of Claude-Emma suggest that these pieces called for a maturer

audience. The pianist Maurice Dumesnil later recalled Debussy's advice on the performance of the pieces: Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum: Not too fast, with a little humour aimed at good old Clementi. Faster and brilliant towards the end. Jimbo's Lullaby: Play more clumsily on the first page, stressing the wrong accents. Serenade for the Doll: Delicate and graceful, with nothing of the passion of a Spanish serenader. The Snow is Dancing: This depicts a mood as well as being a tone picture: it should be misty sad and monotonous, and not too fast, not fast at all. The Little Shepherd: Make a clear difference between the shepherd's improvisation on his flute and the dance motif. Golliwogg's Cake-walk: The first and third sections are very rhythmical, with a strong emphatic rhythm: the middle part, in contrast, must be very free: there is a suggestion of the trombone in the part marked with great emotion: do not be afraid to overdo it here. Another pianist, Harold Bauer, mentions Debussy's allusion to Wagner's Tristan in the last piece, with a mocking reference to the famous Tristan chord. The titles of the pieces are self-explanatory.

Idil Biret

Born in Ankara, Idil Biret began piano lessons at the age of three. She displayed an outstanding gift for music and graduated from the Paris Conservatoire with three first prizes when she was fifteen. She studied piano with Alfred Cortot and Wilhelm Kempff, and composition with Nadia Boulanger. Since the age of sixteen Idil Biret has performed in concerts around the world playing with major orchestras under the direction of conductors such as Monteux, Boult, Kempe, Sargent, de Burgos, Pritchard, Groves and Mackerras. She has participated in the festivals of Montreal, Persepolis, Royan, La Rochelle, Athens, Berlin, Gstaad and Istanbul. She was also invited to perform at the 85th birthday celebration of Wilhelm Backhaus and at the 90th birthday celebration of Wilhelm Kempff. Idil Biret received the Lily Boulanger Memorial Fund award (1954/1964), the Harriet Cohen/Dinu Lipatti Gold Medal (1959) and the Polish Artistic Merit Award (1974) and was named Chevalier de l'Ordre du Mérite in 1976.

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Piano Music for Children

Idil Biret, Piano

	SCHUMANN	
1 - 13	Kinderszenen Op. 15	(19:03)
	TCHAIKOVSKY	
14 - 37	Album for the Young	(29:15)
	DEBUSSY	
38 - 43	Children's Corner	(17:24)

Recorded at Clara Wieck Auditorium, Heidelberg, in May, 1993.
Producer: Günter Appenheimer
Music Notes: Keith Anderson (English)
Cris Posslac (German)
Frédéric Castello (French)

Cover Painting: Idil Biret at age 10 by Adnan Varinca

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Piano Music for Children
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